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ABSTRACT

A study examined the coverage of women in one midwestern college newspaper and three midwestern city newspapers during 1992, the Year of the Woman. Bylines, references, and the roles portrayed in newspaper photographs were examined to determine how local newspapers covered the record number of women running for political office, the record number of women entering the work force, and the record number of women receiving medals at the Winter Olympics as compared to coverage in national newspapers. Of the total coverage across all categories, less than one-third was devoted to women. The results also indicated that on most pages and in most roles, photos of men greatly outnumbered those of women. The roles portrayed by women were stereotypical and they were seen most often on the lifestyle page. Men also dominated byline coverage and were solicited for comment more often than were women. In general, local newspapers covered women in the same format as the national newspapers, limiting coverage of females to photos, bylines, portrayed roles and location. Although positive changes have been made for women in a variety of areas such as bylines, photographs, solicitation for comment, and coverage on the front page in relation to the national level, these changes are slight and still do not reflect the roles of women in contemporary society. Women still tend to be seen playing the roles of socialite and entertainer, despite their advances in professional occupations and political office. Research in this area should continue to see how newspapers are keeping up with the changing face of society. (Contains 18 references.) (Author/TB)

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A Content Analysis of Women in Local and College Newspapers During the Year of the Woman

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Abstract

This study examined the coverage of women in one Midwest college and three Midwest city newspapers during 1992, the Year of the Woman. Bylines, references, and the roles portrayed in newspaper photographs were examined to determine how local newspapers covered the record number of women running for political office, the record number of women entering the work force, and the record number of women receiving medals at the Winter Olympics as compared to coverage in national newspapers. Of total coverage across all categories, less than one-third was devoted to women. The results also indicated that on most pages and in most roles, photos of men greatly outnumber those of women. The roles portrayed by women were stereotypical and they were seen most often on the lifestyle page. Men also dominated byline coverage and were solicited for comment more often than women. In general, local newspapers covered women in the same format as the national newspapers, limiting coverage of females in photos, bylines, portrayed roles and location.

A Content Analysis of Women in Local and College Newspapers
During the Year of the Woman

Introduction

1992 was named the "Year of the Woman." This slogan arose from the unprecedented number of women who ran for political office in that year. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics (1993) the November 1992 elections broke new ground for women when four newly elected women gained seats in the Senate and 24 in the House of Representatives, making up approximately 10% of the voting members -- a first . In August, the month when the Republican party held its nominating convention, Bridge (1992a) found there were no stories on the precedent-setting female candidacies in national newspapers. In fact, there was almost no mention of the women who could be history-making individuals. In 1992 Women experienced their highest labor force participation rate of all time, accounting for 57.8% of of the total labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 1993, p.1). In the 1992 winter Olympics, women won a record number of medals, more than their male counterparts.

There is a growing awareness of women's issues in the 1990s in politics, as well as other areas. In the mass media, however, there seems to be a lack of coverage of these important issues (Eikenmeyer, 1993). The portrayal of women in modern media and popular culture is an important issue to study because of the way they socialize gender roles. The mass media, along with the family, the educational system, and peer groups are in part responsible for the way men and women are perceived and portrayed in today's society. This study compared the results of college and city newspaper coverage of women with that found in national newspapers during a certain time frame in the Year of the Woman. In an effort to determine how local newspapers' inclusion of women compared to that found in national newspapers, female bylines, solicitations for comment,

roles, and photographs were analyzed. A review of related literature, the method used, results, limitations, and directions for future research are also provided.

Review of Literature

Falchikov (1986) suggests that it is important to understand that the mass media has an important role in the formation, transmission and legitimation of public attitudes. This is especially true in the case of children and adolescents who gain their first insights into the real world through exposure, which may be accidental and haphazard (Levy, 1990). "For most of us, our reality -- what Walter Lippmann called 'the pictures in our heads' - is what the media says it is" (Luebke, 1986, p. 30). Moreover, Falchikov (1986) agreed with others that newspapers put forward only a "selective view of reality," and that children may easily get the wrong idea from television as to the roles of men and women.

Luebke (1989) noted the media's role in attitude formation and maintenance, and further suggested that the times may not have changed as much as we suppose when it comes to the stereotyped images of women found in American newspapers. Butler and Paisley (1980) further noted the impact of media images on females, saying, "Images formed from mediated precepts become part of a woman's conception of herself" (p. 49). The majority of stereotypical roles were a result of the television of the 1970s where women were portrayed as dependent on men (Lovdal, 1989).

Picture books for young children further displayed the prevalence of sex-role stereotyping. Reinstein (1984) studied the Caldecott Medal picture books of the years 1971-1980. She concluded that "females were markedly underrepresented, and where they did appear, they were generally presented in traditional roles --- as wives and mothers who love to cook, who giggle and talk too much, who are lazy, vain, passive, afraid of mice" (p. 116).

The outlook for newspaper coverage is no brighter. The face of the news today is predominantly male. The media is especially at fault for lagging behind the times when

it comes to the portrayal of women on the front pages of the nation's newspapers, as well as other key pages (Bridge, 1992b). Davis (1982) analyzed 5,500 stories in eight newspapers and found that only 8.6% of the stories featured females as the main character, and those stories were typically shorter and had smaller headlines. According to Davis (1982) women also lagged behind in front page coverage, sports and business. Females were generally not quoted, especially in hard news stories, and were identified not by their own first names, but rather that of the spouse. Miller (1975) concluded that newspapers, in their photographic coverage of the news, generally do not reflect the roles women occupy in life.

A survey conducted for the Women, Men and Media Project (WWM) sponsored by the University of Southern California, showed references to women on the front pages of ten major and ten smaller-market newspapers from around the country averaged only 13% during the month of February, 1992 (Bridge, 1992a). The study also suggested that for the fifth year in a row, "...women remain significantly underrepresented as sources, subjects and reporters" (Schmidt & Collins, 1993, p. 39). A study performed by Bridge (1992) examined the nation's three top newsmagazines: Newsweek, Time and U.S. News and World Report. On average, men were referenced 86% of the time; and women 14% of the time.

Another study performed by Bridge (1992a) during August , 1992 suggested similar results. In August, during the Year of the Woman, females were only referenced 14% of the time. In bylines and photos, women fared better, averaging 34%. There has been steady growth in the percentage of females included in news photos ranging from 26% to 34%, the highest yet according to Bridge (1992a). The byline average has also grown from 28% in 1989 to 34% in 1991 and 1992, while references have risen little (13% in 1989; 12% in 1990; 13% in 1991; and 14% in 1992).

Blackwood (1983) suggested that the women's movement had made many advances in putting women in more prominent roles since the 1970s. In order to test his

assertion and determine whether the passage of seven years brought about change in the policies of newspapers regarding women, he examined 92 papers yielding 3,248 photographs. His findings suggested that "Far from providing a time in which the photo coverage .... has shifted toward more lifelike portrayal of men and women, the past seven years have resulted in an even greater disparity" (p.714). The results further supported Miller (1975) in that men outnumbered women by nearly four to one in a national newsmagazine.

In addition to the findings in American newspapers, the same problem of the underrepresentation of women exists in Canadian newspapers. MediaWatch, the national women's organization involved with the issues of portrayal and status of women in the media, undertook two surveys during the years of 1990 and 1991. On average, women were mentioned less than one fifth of the time and were accredited with less than 30% of the bylines (MediaWatch, 1991). There was no significant change in the average number of bylines women received between the years.

In conclusion, we can see that the problem of the lack of women's inclusion in mass media and, more specifically, newspapers, is not a new phenomenon. Research exists concerning coverage on a national level, yet there is considerably less on the smaller, local and college level newspapers. As the local newspapers are so prevalent and serve as important sources of information in many households, and college newspapers are a source of information to many college students, an analysis of them is timely and appropriate. This study examined how local city and college newspapers compare to national newspapers in their coverage of women during part of the year of the woman.

Method

Analysis

This study utilized the methods suggested by Luebke (1989), Bridge (1992a), and Blackwood (1983) by comparing the number of photos of men and women, the roles

portrayed in the photos, the sections where the photos appeared, the number of female bylines, and the number of times women were solicited for comment via a content analysis.

A content analysis was done on the data in order to reveal frequencies and percents for each category. Berger (1991) suggested that a content analysis could easily be used to describe and make inferences about mass media , and that the method lends itself easily to examining the coverage and portrayal of women in newspapers. Data was categorized based on photos, roles portrayed, location, and bylines.

Data

Three newspapers were from medium size Midwest cities: The South Bend Tribune, The Elkhart Truth, and the Valparaiso Vidette Messenger . A college newspaper from a medium size Midwest university was also used, The Notre Dame/Saint Mary's Observer . The sections examined replicate those used by Luebke (1989) and Bridge (1992a) including: the front page, the first page of the local section, the business section, the lifestyle section, the entertainment section and the sports section.

Five days during the month of February, 1992 were randomly selected (Bridge, 1992). The photos, bylines, and solicitation for comment were recorded. Newspaper sections were classified as: Page one, the first page of the local section, the business section, the lifestyle section, the entertainment section, and the sports section.

The data was collected by assigning specific role categories to the photos as defined by Miller (1975). The ten categories are: (1) politician/public official, (2) professional, (3) sports figure, (4) entertainer, (5) socialite/celebrity, (6) activist/advocate, (7) criminal, (8) human interest (falling into none of the above categories), (and 9) other. The politician/public official role is portrayed in an official capacity as the holder of any elective, appointive or salaried administrative position in federal, state or local government, or as a candidate for any such elective or appointed office. The professional role was defined as portrayed in some professional or vocational role (artists, students

engaged in academic activities and military troops and officers). The sports figure is portrayed in a professional or non-professional sports activity. The entertainer is engaged in professional or non-professional entertainment. The socialite/celebrity is engaged in personal recreation, leisure or socializing. The activist/advocate is portrayed as a spokesperson, representative or volunteer for some special interest cause, and/or as having deliberately thrust oneself into the public eye. The criminal was portrayed as arrested for, charged with or convicted of breaking the law. The human interest is portrayed as falling into none of the above categories, and as having been discovered by the media without deliberate intention and as having become newsworthy for one's own activities. The other category is portrayed in a role other than those described above.

Results and Discussion

In the Year of the Woman, females remain significantly underrepresented in the news. Approximately 74% , or 719 of the representations are male oriented, while 26%, or 251 representations are female oriented. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's preliminary estimates of the population of the United States, approximately 51% of the total population is female, while approximately 48% is male (Ries & Stone, 1992). Thus, it becomes apparent that local, as well as national newspapers, do not reflect the true distribution of genders in society.

Insert Table 1 about here

In the four newspapers analyzed, men are consistently represented at least twice as often as females. The paper with the largest disparity is the South Bend Tribune with 78% of the coverage being male oriented, and 21% being female oriented. The paper with the most equal representation is the Vidette Messenger with 67% being male oriented, and 32% being female oriented. Even the Vidette Messenger, however, is far

from representing the genders equally. These statistics reflect the same message about the underrepresentation of women as do the national newspapers.

According to table two, an analysis of bylines, solicitation for comment, and photographs reveals more detail about the distribution.

Insert Table 2 about here

Including all four papers, 137, or 65% of the 209 total photographs are of men, and only 72, or 34% are of women. This reflects a positive change from the national level two decades ago when women were outnumbered by men in photographs by four to one (Miller, 1975). Of the 278 bylines analyzed, 189, or 67% are of men, and 89, or 32% are of women. Of the 483 solicitations for comments, 81%, or 393 are male, and 18%, or 90 are female. The largest disparity concerns solicitations for comments. These results suggest that men are still seen as being the experts on topics. These statistics reflect a slight increase from a study of national newsmagazines referencing men 86% of the time, and women 14% of the time (Bridge, 1992b). Thus, some progress is being made in this arena. The average for females in bylines has grown slowly from 28% in 1989 (Bridge, 1992a) to 34% currently.

According to the third table, which describes the overall representation of males and females by locations, women are represented less in every section except the lifestyle section.

Insert Table 3 about here

This table suggests that men are represented on page one 70% of the time, and women only 30% of the time. This reflects a positive change at the local level, as the Women, Men and Media project showed only a 13% representation of females nation

wide (Bridge, 1992a). Men outnumber women on the inside and business pages as well with 70% and 87% respectively, and women 29% and 12% respectively. Men greatly outnumber women on the sports page accounting for 86%, and women 13%. These statistics reflect what Davis (1982) found a decade earlier, in that women were underrepresented in coverage on the sports, business, and front pages of newspapers.

Insert Table 4 about here

The final table describes the roles of men and women portrayed in photographs. According to table four, the majority of the photographs are of sports figures, representing 29% of all photographs analyzed. This statistic reflects the Winter Olympic games which were being held at that time. Despite the fact females were winning more medals than were their male counterparts, men still are featured 67% of the time, and women only 33% of the time. Sports figures represent approximately 29% of all male photographs and 20% of all female photographs.

The second most common photograph, accounting for 22% of all photographs, is that of the professional. Women are portrayed in this role in approximately 11% of all their photographs, while men are portrayed in this role in approximately 28% of all their photographs. Thus, men are portrayed as professionals more than twice as often as women.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 22% of all employed women and approximately 25% of employed men are in professional areas such as "executive, administrative, managerial, and professional speciality (Reis & Stone, 1992, p. 334). Professional specialty areas include, for example, physicians, registered nurses, teachers and lawyers. Executive, managerial, and administrative areas include, for example, accountants, financial managers, and education administrators. Once again, the portrayal of women and men as professionals does not reflect society.

Reis and Stone (1992) suggest that the number of females in professional specialties and executive/managerial/administrative positions has more than doubled since 1975 (p.335). Thus, females continue to be significantly underrepresented in important ways at both the national and local levels.

The third most common photograph, that of socialite/celebrity, accounts for 11% of all photographs. This statistic suggests that women are portrayed in this role significantly more often than men. Female are represented in 66% of these photographs, and males are represented in 34% of these photographs. This category represents the second largest role for women, containing 22% of all their photographs, while it contains only 8% of all male photographs.

The role of entertainer follows closely, accounting for 10% of all photographs. In this category men and women are equally represented in that 54% of these photographs are of men, and 46% are of women. However, when looking at the percentage of photographs for this role in relation to other roles for each gender, the results are not so promising. More specifically, 13% of all female photographs are contained in this role, while only 8% of all male photographs are contained in this role. Therefore, the genders are still not equally represented.

The roles of politician/public official and advocate/activist represent 9% and 6% of all photographs respectively. Men represent 89% and females represent 11% of the politician role; while men represent 46% and women represent 54% of the activist role. Approximately 12% of all male photographs represent the politician role, and 4% represent the activist role. Only 2% of all female photographs represent the politician role, while 9% represent the activist role.

The lack of coverage of women in this role is surprising since it was during this time that the record breaking number of women declared their candidacies for political offices. These results match what Bridge (1992a) found in national newspapers during this time frame.

Men represent 100% of those in the criminal role, as there are no pictures of women in that role. This role accounts for only 2% of all male photographs. Men and women have equal representation in the role of human interest with five photographs each, accounting for only 4% of all photographs. This role accounts for 3% of all male photographs, and 6% of all female photographs.

As Miller (1975) suggested almost 20 years ago, newspapers do not reflect the variety of roles females occupy in life. The most common role for women reflected in the current data, the sports figure, is largely due to Kristy Yamaguchi and the Winter Olympic games. The second most popular role for women is that of socialite/celebrity; and the third is entertainer. Considering the fact that in 1992, the labor force participation rate for females was 57.8%" (1993, U.S. Department of Labor Statisties, p.1), the current results reflect incorrect images of women at the local level. Moreover, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, male labor force participation declined from 86.4% to 76.1% in 1990 (Reis & Stone, 1992). Again, the newspapers analyzed do not reflect this decline.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study possesses some limitations which deserve attention. First, and most important, is the small sample size. Utilizing only one month of an entire year may not accurately reflect the portrayal of men and women in the local newspapers. Although utilizing the same time frame as one employed in a survey of national newspapers allows for a more accurate comparison at the national level, a larger sample covering more months would provide a more accurate indication of the actual portrayal. Also, using local newspapers from a variety of areas across the nation would provide a more elaborate perspective from which to evaluate the coverage of both men and women.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that by the year 2000, the female labor force participation will rise to almost 62% (Reis & Stone, 1992). This type of research should be extended into the future to determine how newspapers, both nationally

and locally, are keeping up with the changing face of society. A second area for future research is to extend the items of analysis. Analyses of race, ethnic and age representations of men and women would be useful in determining more fully how accurately or inaccurately local and national newspapers reflect society's changes. Finally, a more detailed analysis could be conducted along with tests of significance to more accurately describe the coverage of both men and women.

Conclusion

Although positive changes have been made for women in a variety of areas such as bylines, photographs, solicitation for comment, and coverage on the front page in relation to the national level, these changes are slight and still do not reflect the roles of women in contemporary society. Women still tend to be seen playing the roles of socialite and entertainer, despite their advances in professional occupations and political offices. One would never know about the history-making period in politics during February, 1992 by only relying on the newspapers. This reflects the unfortunate place women are relinquished to in the news, both nationally and locally.

Women, who constitute the majority of the population, are still significantly underrepresented in almost all areas of the news at both the local and national levels. Despite the women's movement and alleged efforts by newspapers to improve their coverage, a wide gap still exists between what is, and what should be.

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Table 1.

Overall Representation of Men and Women by Newspaper

	Elkhart Truth		South Bend Tribune		Vidette Messenger		Observer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Men	197	75.47%	234	78.26%	176	67.95%	112	74.17%
Women	64	24.53%	65	21.74%	83	32.05%	39	25.83%
Total	261	100%	299	100%	259	100%	151	100%

Table 2.

Bylines, Solicitation for Comment and Photographs

	Men		Women			
	N	%	N	%	Total	%
Photographs	137	65.55%	72	34.45%	209	100%
Bylines	189	67.99%	89	32.01%	278	100%
Solicitation for Comment	393	81.37%	90	18.36%	483	100%
Total	719	74.12%	251	25.88%	970	100%

Table 3.

Overall Representations of Men and Women by Location

	Page One		Inside Pages		Business Pages		Lifestyle Pages		Sports Pages		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Men	174	70.73	152	70.37	95	87.96	62	48.81	236	86.44	719
Women	72	29.27	64	29.63	13	12.04	65	51.19	37	13.56	251
Total	246	100%	216	100%	108	100%	127	100%	273	100%	970

Table 4.

Roles of Men and Women Represented in Photographs

	Men		Women		Total	
	N	(%) of Role	N	(%of Role)	N	(% of All Photos)
Politician/ Public Official	17	89.47	2	10.53	19	19.09
Professional	39	82.98	8	17.02	47	22.49
Sports Figure	41	67.21	20	32.79	61	29.19
Entertainer	12	54.54	10	45.46	22	10.53
Socialite/ Celebrity	8	33.33	16	66.67	24	11.48
Advocate/ Activist	6	46.15	7	53.85	13	6.23
Criminal	3	100	0	0	3	1.44
Human Interest	5	50	5	50	10	4.68
Other	6	60.00	4	40.00	10	4.78
Total	137	65.55	72	34.45	209	100%